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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
April 10, 2006
Confirmation Hearing

The Committee on Education met at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, April 10, 2006, in Room 1525 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on the confirmation of Steven Titus to the Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission. Senators present: Ron Raikes, Chairperson; Patrick Bourne; Gwen Howard; Gail Kopplin; Ed Schrock; and Elaine Stuhr. Senators absent: Dennis Byars, Vice Chairperson; and Vickie McDonald.

CONFIRMATION HEARING ON
DR. STEVEN TITUS TO THE
NEBRASKA EDUCATIONAL
TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

SENATOR RAIKES: Stand by for just a moment, we'll open the hearing and get this underway.

STEVEN TITUS: (via telephone) Great.

SENATOR RAIKES: Good morning. This is...

STEVEN TITUS: Good morning.

SENATOR RAIKES: ...welcome to this hearing of the Education Committee of the Nebraska Legislature. This particular hearing is for the specific purpose of considering the confirmation of Dr. Steven Titus as a new member of the Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission. You have materials before you regarding Dr. Titus and his qualifications for this position. In the way of preliminaries, Dr. Titus, I'll mention to you, the members of the committee, we have Senator Pat Bourne from Omaha, who is not here yet this morning; Senator Gail Kopplin of Gretna, who is here; Senator Elaine Stuhr of Bradshaw, who is here but is sitting in the wrong spot (laughter). She is the legal counsel, she claims.

SENATOR STUHR: Who's sitting here?

SENATOR RAIKES: Oh, that's me (laughter). I was in the wrong spot, too, but I'm...

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SENATOR HOWARD: (Laughter) And I don't even have a name.

SENATOR RAIKES: And, by the way, Senator Pat Bourne has just arrived, so he is on patrol. I am Ron Raikes. I represent District 25 in east Lincoln. Senator Dennis Byars is the Vice Chair of the committee, but he's not here. Senator Vickie McDonald from St. Paul is a member of the committee who's not here. Senator Gwen Howard from Omaha is here, as is Senator Ed Schrock from Elm Creek. And our committee clerk whom you've already talked to is Kris Valentin. So, with that introduction, what we'll do is we'll have a statement from you regarding this appointment, and we'll subject you to cross-examination by members of the committee. Then after that, we'll entertain proponent testimony, opponent testimony, neutral testimony, and at that point, close the hearing. So, to move on, Dr. Titus, please tell us a little bit about yourself and why you're interested in this appointment.

STEVEN TITUS: (Exhibit 1) Yeah, thank you. Well, first, I'd like to just thank the committee for the nomination. I'm in the Ft. Meyer airport at the moment and on the way back to Omaha. But I currently serve as president of Midland Lutheran College. I've held that role since 2002, and my background...I think you can see from my resume has been in higher education and in law. And my passions really are around the (inaudible) side of organizations and leadership, so I've spent a great deal of time attending to those matters to include developing and growing my own leadership. One, I'm interested in the commission. I think it's a wonderful opportunity to really...to connect to learning. And there's a direct link between what I do and what the commission is about. And it is about growing good citizens, using technology to work and grow the community and to connect us to each other, which leads to an educated work force and to a stronger community. And so I just see a real strong opportunity and link between what my profession is in higher education, and in education generally and using the tools and technology that we have to strengthen (inaudible) that.

SENATOR RAIKES: Okay, Doctor. Any questions from the committee? Senator Howard has one.

SENATOR HOWARD: Well, not really a question. I thought

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your name looked familiar. I graduated from Midland Lutheran College undergraduate and have been back there since. And so, I'm glad you're running for this office.

STEVEN TITUS: Thank you. And you and I have met, actually, when you were on campus and spoke to, I can't remember which group it was, but...or at least were introduced, I think, to the group.

SENATOR HOWARD: Oh, well, thank you for remembering that. Thank you.

STEVEN TITUS: Yes.

SENATOR RAIKES: Any other questions? Doctor, I guess I would have one. Given the difficulty we had of arranging this hearing around your schedule, are you going to have time to serve on this commission?

STEVEN TITUS: Yes. That's a great question (laugh). And I just laugh because this year has been particularly challenging just because we got a major (inaudible) campaign going on and that really winds up this summer. And so I do feel that I will have the time to commit to the commission.

SENATOR RAIKES: Okay. Any other questions from the committee? Senator Stuhr has one.

SENATOR STUHR: Yes, Dr. Titus, what do you see as one of the challenges that you will be facing as a member of this commission?

STEVEN TITUS: Oh, good question. I have no idea to be quite honest. I mean, I guess I really hadn't thought about that challenge. I mean, you know, I'm relatively new to Nebraska. I mean, I've been here for four years so, you know, I'm still learning the political landscape a little bit and learning some of the issues so that might be a challenge for me, I suppose. But I haven't found a whole lot of challenges, I guess, in that regard. I think that, you know, people generally are, you know, pretty interested in working with each other and so I look forward to just to learning a little bit more about, you know, what some of the issues are in the state, I guess.

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SENATOR STUHR: Okay, thank you for your willingness to serve.

STEVEN TITUS: Yes, thank you.

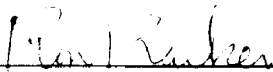
SENATOR RAIKES: Any other questions? Okay. Well, that will conclude our opening section of the hearing then. Is there any proponent testimony? Any opponent testimony? Any neutral testimony? Okay. Before I close the hearing then, I'll just offer this comment. I'm pleased that you were able to meet with us over the phone. I will tell you that from my viewpoint, my vote had we not been able to meet would have been against confirmation. I think it's critically important that this take place and so that's not particularly directed at you, but it's directed at the process.

STEVEN TITUS: Yes.

SENATOR RAIKES: And so, again, I'm pleased that you were able to meet with us, and thank you...

STEVEN TITUS: Yes, sir. Thanks.

SENATOR RAIKES: ...thank you for doing that and for being willing to serve. Okay, that will close the hearing on the confirmation of Dr. Titus for the Nebraska Education Telecommunications Commission.


Chairperson


Committee Clerk